DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 696 CS 004 761

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TITLE What Does a "Boy-Oriented" Teacher Look Like?
PUB DATE May 78
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (23rd, Houston, Texas, May 1-5, 1978); For related documents, see CS 004 735, CS 004 746, and CS 004 764

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Males; Sex Discrimination; *Sex Fairness; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Qualifications; *Teacher Recruitment

ABSTRACT

This paper, one in a series of four describing a boy-oriented program for elementary school children, addresses the problem of staffing an elementary school with teachers who will be able to effectively teach boys as well as girls. It suggests that empathy toward both boys and girls, personal warmth and security in the classroom, a high degree of willingness to spend extra time with students in boy-oriented activities, a high degree of dedication to meet individual student academic and affective needs, and resourcefulness in using a variety of teaching techniques to promote a challenging and effective boy-oriented curriculum for both boys and girls are the major criteria for such a staff. (TJ)

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What Does a "Boy-Oriented" Teacher Look Like?

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Texas, May 1-5, 1978)

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WHAT DOES A BOY-ORIENTED TEACHER LOOK LIKE?

Boys traditionally seem to have more difficulty in school. Boys tend to fail more than girls academically. Girls tend to comprise a greater percentage of the "top groups." More boys have reading problems, are considered "discipline problems," and are enrolled in special reading, math and language remediation classes or special education classes. In addition, more boys tend to be referred to the school psychologist or counselor for help. More boys score in Q_1 on reading, math and language standardized tests in the elementary schools. More girls tend to score in Q_4 of those same tests. More girls than boys are classified as "top students." There tend to be more negative comments written in cumulative files about boys than girls; however, there tend to be more positive comments written about girls. These "general knowledge" statements were substantiated by an investigation within the Thermalito Union Elementary School District in an analysis of standardized test results, cumulative files, remedial reading, math and language class enrollments, "discipline problems" identified by teachers, "top students" identified by teachers, enrollments in special education classes, psychological referral records, etc. It was found that boys, on a two-to-one basis, had more difficulties in school. In contrast, the girls, compared to boys, succeeded more than the boys, also on a two-to-one ratio.

These local findings have been substantiated at the state levels also. For example, data from the State of California (1975-1976) testing program indicates that, regardless of categorical-aid programs, boys scored significantly and substantially lower than the girls throughout the state (see Table 1).

Table 1

California State Data Analysis: 1975-76

Grade/Sex	Reading	Written Expression	Spelling	Math
Grade 2				
Girls	71			
Boys	65			
Grade 3				
Girls	84			
Boys	80			
Grade 6				
Girls	71.6	69.0	61.5	59.7
Boys	67.9	63.1	58.6	60.0

The California State data analysis reflects a national trend. It is not unique to California children or Thermalito students.

In an attempt to attack this educational need, an ESEA Title III (later re-termed IV-C) was written by the Thermalito Union Elementary School District. It was funded for a three year period to develop a "Boy-Oriented" primary program which would be successful with both boys and girls. The project was named "Equality Education for Everyone," later nicknamed "Project Boy." The main goal of the program was to maintain the high achievement level of girls in reading, math and language and to raise up the achievement levels of boys to equal the girls' achievement level. This was to be achieved through (1) the planning/development of "boy-oriented" classroom activities, playground activities and extra-curricular activities; (2) a staff-development program and (3) development of a boy-oriented program package for dissemination purposes: The Project Boy Syllabus Activity Card Program.

There are various important aspects in the implementation of a "boy-oriented" program, be it the Project Boy Syllabus Activity Card Program or any other type of "boy-oriented" program: the needs assessment, implementation strategies, program process/product evaluation, staffing patterns, staff development/in-service, etc. The purpose of this paper is to discuss staff "boy-orientedness" which, according to the Project Boy Program Evaluation/Analyses/Recommendations,

facilitates the program thrust (Barnes and Gehringer, 1978c).*

A school can adapt/adopt a "boy-oriented" primary program with the current staff, which, in all probability, will be entirely female. Program success is not dependent upon a 50% male/50% female staffing pattern; however, it is felt that the program can be greatly enhanced if such a staffing pattern can be achieved (Gehringer and Barnes, 1978c).

Realistically speaking, a 50% male/50% female ratio might not be immediately attainable but it can be an objective toward which the district can work each year.

When interviewing a prospective teacher, how do administrators and teacher-interviewer teams identify a "boy-oriented" teacher? This is not an easy task, and requires careful thought and planning.

To attack this problem of identifying what a "boy-oriented" teacher looks like, a team of teachers, resource personnel and administrators defined and developed a "Boy-Oriented Teacher Criteria List." (A comparable list was prepared for instructional-aides). These criteria were utilized in the selection of project teachers, both male and female. The administrators rated interested teachers and the teachers rated themselves, using the criteria list, on a one-to-five

*Note: The Project Boy Program Abstract and Evaluation are reported elsewhere (Barnes and Gehringer, 1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c; Gehringer and Barnes, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1978d). Statistically significant gains (to the .05 level of significance) were made by boys. The overall objectives of the project were met: Boys achieved at the high level of girls in Reading, Math and Language.

rating scale. Interesting enough, the males selected for program participation rated themselves an over-all score of 5, while the females rated themselves an over-all 4.

In retrospect, a re-evaluation of the criteria was made by the staff, and it was felt that the criteria could be trimmed to five criteria, as noted on Table 2. Needless to say, not all female teachers are female-oriented and not all male teachers are male-oriented.

The first of the five criteria addresses empathy towards both boys and girls. Empathy is defined to include, but not limited to, the following: a rapport; and love of; a hitting it off with; a sharing with; an affinity for; a sensitivity toward; tactfulness and consideration for; understanding of; in touch with; an openness with; and an ability to listen and understand another's point of view or feeling.

The second of the five criteria addresses personal warmth and security in classroom atmosphere. A teacher who has a warm classroom environment, who is secure in a classroom situation, has a superior learning environment.

The third criteria describes a willingness to spend extra time with students, during and after school, evenings, overnight and weekends in "boy-oriented" activities. This type of an activity does not necessarily have to involve a lot of extra time for a teacher. The entire class can be taken on a special weekend outing. For example, there are

Table 2

PROJECT BOY: "BOY-ORIENTED"

TEACHER CRITERIA

1. High degree of empathy towards both boys and girls.

2. Personal warmth and security in classroom atmosphere.

3. High degree of willingness to spend extra time with students, during and after school, overnight and weekends in "boy-oriented" activities.

4. High degree of dedication to meet individual pupil academic and affective needs.

5. Resourcefulness in utilization of a variety of teaching techniques and materials, including the judicious use of concrete/manipulative materials and science, math and athletic/outdoor activities to help promote a challenging, effective "boy-oriented" curriculum for both boys and girls.

numerous local sports events (high school basketball games, local baseball league games, college football games, etc.), to which the least athletic teacher can take children. Ice skating, roller skating, kite flying, zoos, pet shops, motorcycle races, snow trips and nature hikes are other examples. Camping is a great "boy-oriented" activity and an overnight stay at the teacher's home is popular. The latter activity, it is suggested, should include one to three pupils at a time.

Teachers report that the most effective outings are conducted with one to five pupils. Trips closer to home, utilizing local possibilities seem best. Use of private transportation (teacher or parent's automobiles) or district stationwagons are preferred, as opposed to school and/or chartered bus. Simple activities seem more effective, such as, a local football game or three pupils staying overnight with the teacher.

The fourth criteria addresses a high degree of dedication to meet individual pupil academic and affective needs. Pupils who have been assessed, their instructional levels correctly determined and who are given programs that fit their needs usually find that they succeed. The old saying that success breeds success appears to be quite true! A pupil who is successfully learning to read, write, spell, etc., is a happier pupil, compared to a student who is failing to succeed. A student who is learning about himself, likes himself, is learning about others, and has a good self concept

is a more rounded person. Some teachers can successfully implement individualized, diagnostic-prescriptive reading, math, and language programs, while other teachers find success in the more traditional three-group basal reading program. Within each of these types of programs, and any in-between programs, the academic and affective needs of pupils can be met, depending on the level of teacher expertise and teacher dedication to meeting individual pupil needs of both boys and girls.

The fifth criteria addresses the resourcefulness of the teacher in the utilization of a variety of teaching techniques and materials, including the judicious use of concrete/manipulative materials and science, math and athletic/outdoor activities to help promote a challenging effective "boy-oriented" curriculum for both boys and girls.

When evaluating and rating current staff members and potential staff members to identify the "boy-oriented" teachers, it becomes readily apparent that many staff members (males and females) are more "girl-oriented," as they prefer working with girl students, rather than boys. Even "girl-oriented" teachers can implement various aspects of a "boy-oriented" program and find more success with boys. As with students, teachers like success. Success breeds success and a "boy-oriented" program, similar to the Project Boy Syllabus Activity Card Program, could possibly encourage and help "girl-oriented" and "boy-oriented" teachers to become more successful with both boys and girls.

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